SPRING 2020 : VOLUME 1 : ISSUE 2

Ṣirāṭ Link

A path for connecting with Allah, others, and one's self

Returning to Allah

Into the Depths of Knowledge

Is My Repentance Accepted?

Islam's Early Difficulties

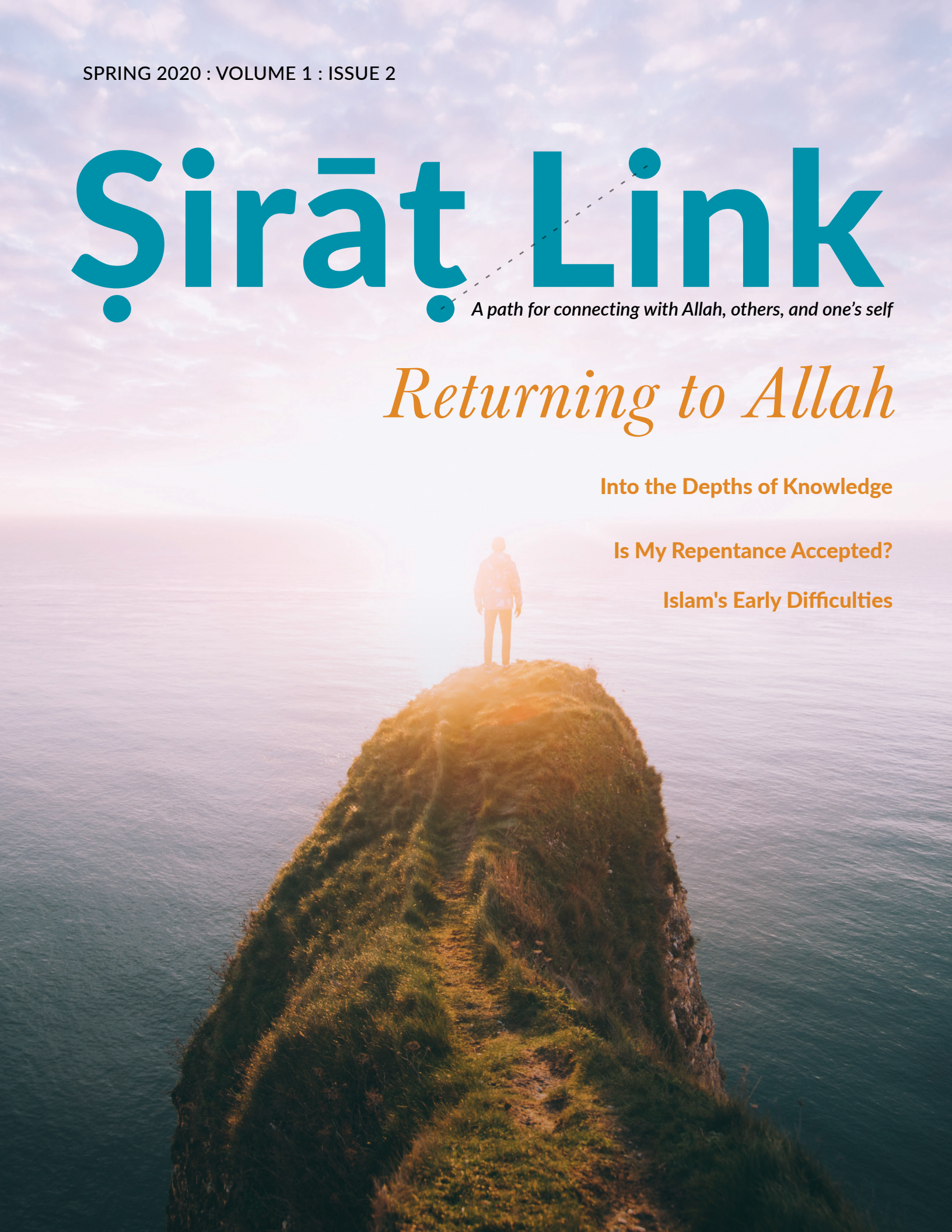


Table of CONTENTS

02 Beauty in Sacrifice

04 Ramaḍān Around the World

06 Into the Depths of Knowledge

08 Islam's Early Difficulties

10 Finding Strength Through the Ahl-Bayt (ʿa)

12 Abū Dharr, the Pinnacle of Change

14 Has Allah accepted my Repentance?

16 Ask an ʿĀlim

17 Transliteration Guide

Letter from

Salāmun alaykum

May Allah bless you and your families. We are blessed to enter the spiritual season of the months of Shawwāl and Dhul Qaʿdah. We thank Him for giving us the golden opportunity to be showered with His divine love and mercy! This isn't just ordinary love — with Allah's love, we have the potential to reach great success. So, how can we attain this exceptional love and mercy? Allah gives us the recipe to attain His love in the Noble Qurʿān:

قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّـهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّـهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّـهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

Say [O Muḥammad], "If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive your sins." And Allah is the All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. (3:31)

Ṣirāṭ Link

A 2nd Chance Books Publication

وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

For the love of Him, they feed the needy, the orphan, and the prisoner.

(Noble Qurʾān 76:8)

2nd Chance Books is a non-profit organization that was founded in order to assist incarcerated Muslims by providing them with educational materials, a support system, and tools for rehabilitation, thus responding to their numerous questions about Islam, resulting in a more thorough understanding of the religon. So far, they have distributed over 10,000 books to inmates across the country.

Among 2nd Chance's most recent initiatives is Ṣirāṭ Link, a quarterly magazine. The title Ṣirāṭ Link is inspired by the Arabic term Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm, which means the right path. Therefore, we pray that this magazine is a means of guidance to the right path and a connection to Allah, the broader community, and one's self. Inshāʾ Allāh it can serve as an opportunity for growing one's faith through education.

This magazine will be under the guidance and oversight of Moulana Nabi Raza Mir Abidi, Resident ʿĀlim of SABA Center, and several other scholars and experts.

MOULANA ABIDI

Indeed, by following the Prophet's (ṣ) guidance and making a firm effort this month to abstain from sins and seek His divine forgiveness, we can become His beloved ones. In order to truly achieve this lofty status, however, we must also strive to embody the traits of His beloved ones mentioned in the Qurʿān:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَّقِينَ

Indeed, Allah loves the muttaqīn (those who have taqwā)

The muttaqīn are those who have attained taqwā — a state of God-consciousness and fear that allows you to control your desires. This is the month for us to take control of our lives and think before we act. In this month, consciously ask ourselves in as many situations as we can, "Will Allah be pleased with this action of mine?"

وَاللَّـهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَّهِّرِينَ

And Allah loves the muṭṭahhirīn (those who purify themselves)

The muṭṭahhirīn are those who strive to purify themselves externally, spiritually, ritually, and internally. In this month assess yourself: are my thoughts pure? Are my actions pure? Is what I am saying, seeing, and listening to pure? All my body parts are an amānah (trust) from Allah; thus, I must use them in His way.

وَٱللَّهُ يُحِبُّ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

And Allah loves the ṣābirīn (those who are patient).

The patient ones are those who endure, make decisions based on intellect, and have the insight to think long term. During these months of fasting and remembering Allah, strive to be patient with those around you.

وَاللَّـهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And Allah loves the muḥsinīn (the good doers)

The muḥsinīn are those who do good even before being asked. They provide so much goodness that you almost become needless. We should anticipate people's needs and wants, and attempt to resolve them even before they ask and without seeking any reward or acknowledgment.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُقْسِطِينَ

Indeed, Allah loves the muqsiṭīn (the just ones)

Qisṭ is not only justice, it is the highest level of justice. Justice is having balance and ensuring that everything is in its correct place. When we pray to Allah, we ask Him to deal with us according to His faḍl (grace), not justice. This is because if He treats us with His justice, we will be at a loss. Let us deal with others the way we want Allah to deal with us. Even in situations where others are unjust towards us, be gracious and forgive them. By being the bigger person, we will eventually be able to reach their hearts. Pray especially for the injustices being done against our brothers and sisters all over the world.

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

Indeed Allah loves the mutawakkilīn (those who rely on Him)

Those who have tawakkul are those who rely on Allah. Tawakkul means to do your part and put all the pieces together, but leave the result with Allah; His permission is the triggering factor of an action. During these days of the blessings of Allah, let us endeavor to embed positive habits and rectify negative traits within ourselves. If, inshāʾAllāh, we take the first step and do our part, we can rely on Allah to give us the extra support we need.

May Allah elevate our ranks and inspire us to strive in His way and His cause during this holy season and throughout our lives. May Allah give ease and relief to all those around the world who are in need of it. May we be sincere in our efforts at growth during this time in order to receive our rewards from Allah through our beloved Imām al-Mahdī (ʿaj).

With Duʿās,
Nabi R. Mir (Abidi)

Islamic Calendar

Significant Days during Shahr Ramaḍān

10th	Death anniversary of Ḥaḍrat Khadījah (ʿa)	*May 3th, 2020
15th	Birth anniversary of Imām Ḥasan (ʿa)	*May 8th, 2020
19th	Possible Night of Qadr	*May 12th, 2020
21st	Possible Night of Qadr, martyrdom anniversary of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa)	*May 14th, 2020
23rd	Possible Night of Qadr	*May 16th, 2020
Last Friday of the Month	Jumuʿat ul-Widāʾ (bidding farewell to the month)	*May 22nd, 2020

Significant Days during Shahr Shawwāl

1st	Eid ul-Fiṭr	*May 24th, 2020
25th	Death anniversary of Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa)	*June 17th, 2020

Significant Days during Shahr Dhul Qaʿdah

11th	Birth anniversary of Imām ʿAlī ar-Riḍā (ʿa)	*July 3rd, 2020
29th	Death anniversary of Imām Muḥammad at-Taqī al-Jawād (ʿa)	*July 21st, 2020

Days of Significance during Shahr Dhul Ḥijjah

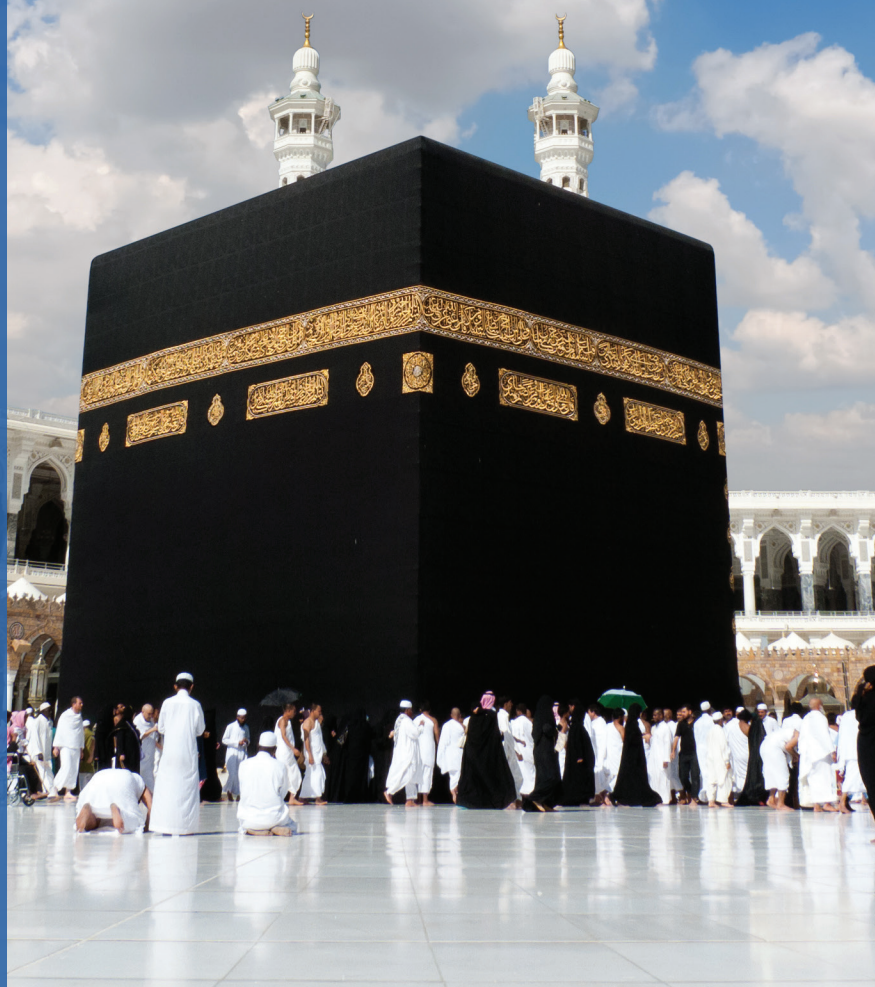
10th	Eid ul-ʿAḍḥā	*July 31st, 2020
18th	Eid ul-Ghadīr	*August 8th, 2020
24th	Eid ul-Mubāhalah	*August 14th, 2020

*Please note the above Gregorian dates are only estimates. The dates are subject to change based on moon sighting, upon which the Islamic calendar is based.

Eid ul-ʿAḍḥā is the celebration that marks the completion of the Ḥajj pilgrimage on the 10th of Dhul Ḥijjah. This Eid marks the accomplishment of the Ḥajj rituals and celebrates the blessings of Allah given to the ḥujjaj (pilgrims) after the completion of Ḥajj, in the same way that Eid ul-Fiṭr marks the accomplishment of the fast.

On this Eid, Muslims all over the world remember the sacrifice that Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) was prepared to do to his son, Prophet Ismāʿīl (ʿa) on Allah's command. We remember how Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) put his love for Allah above everything else, and how he and his son put their trust in Allah and obeyed His command.

The Beauty in the Sacrifice of Eid ul-ʿAḍḥā



In the Noble Qurʿān, Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) said to his son:

"O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see." (37:102)

In the same verse, his son, Prophet Ismāʿīl (ʿa), responded:

"O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah pleases, you will find me of the patient ones." (37:102)

Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) through divine revelation was commanded to sacrifice his son, Prophet Ismāʿīl (ʿa), in a manner similar to the sacrifice of an animal. It is told that at the time of the sword being brought to the neck of Prophet Ismāʿīl (ʿa), Allah placed an animal in his place instead, saving the life of Prophet Ibrāhīm's (ʿa) son.

Therein lies the beauty of this day: the success of Prophet Ibrāhīm (ʿa) in his submission to Allah wholeheartedly. Prophet Ibrāhīm's (ʿa) willingness to sacrifice his son exemplifies his love for Allah and the genuineness of his faith. With no doubts in his heart he followed the command of Allah, and was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice simply for His pleasure. Prophet Ibrāhīm's example is one for us to emulate and follow in our own lives so that we too are conscious of our obedience to Allah and that we are able to educate and raise our children who like Prophet Ismāʾil (ʿa), possess complete reliance and trust in Allah.

Qunūt Corner

رَبَّنَا ٱغْفِرْ لِى وَلِوَٰلِدَىَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ ٱلْحِسَاب

Rabbanā-ghfir lī wa li wālidayya wa lil-muʾminīna yawma yaqūmul-ḥisāb

"Our Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and all the believers, on the day when the reckoning is held."
(Noble Qurʾān, 14:41)

The Day of Reckoning is the day on which we will be called to account for our actions, both good and bad. Alḥamdulillāh, the door of repentance is always open for us in this world, so we can ask Allah to forgive us before that day comes. When we raise our hands to the Heavens during our daily prayers, we ask Allah for His promised forgiveness of our shortcomings. In this supplication, we call upon Allah to forgive not only ourselves and our parents, but also every single believer. Surely, this is a promised forgiveness which He has instructed us to seek in the Noble Qurʿān, elucidating His vast mercy that can encompass every sin of the believers, but still not be exhausted.

IRAN

Ramaḍān Around The World

Imām Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) has said,

"Verily, Allah, the Glorified and Exalted, says, 'The fast is solely for Me, and I am its reward.'"

-Al-Kāfī, Vol. 4, P. 63, Ḥadīth #6

IRAQ

PAKISTAN

INDIA

TURKEY

YEMEN

MALAYSIA

SUDAN

DUBAI

Sudoku

EASY

		2				8		
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			4		3			
		4		5		2	6	9
			6	3	7		5	4
8		6				4		
			3					
			2		9			1

MEDIUM

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							1	
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	9							3
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3		1				6		
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HARD

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EASY

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7	3	4	1	5	8	2	6	9
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MEDIUM

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HARD

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6	1	8	2	4	7	5	3	9
1	3	2	6	9	4	7	5	8

Into the Depths of Knowledge

By Trenton Carl

Knowledge is a building block for everyone's life. If we think back upon our early years, as children, we recall that we were constantly exploring, learning, and asking questions. That's why kids are so curious. It's part of our nature to seek knowledge—it's built-in to us. Islam is a religion that emphasizes the natural talents and inclinations that Allah has already put into us. So, Islam puts a great emphasis on seeking knowledge. We find narrations (ḥadīth) from the Prophet (ṣ) and the Imāms and we find verses (āyāt) in the Qurʾān that illustrate the great value of knowledge and the importance of learning. I want to look at one teaching from Imam ʿAlī (ʿa) to analyze why knowledge is so central to a Muslim's life.

In one of the most important books of ḥadīth, al-Kāfī, it is narrated that Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) taught:

"O people! You should know that your religiosity (al-dīn) will [only] reach perfection if you seek knowledge and act on it. Let it be known: Seeking knowledge is more incumbent upon you than seeking sustenance, [for] your sustenance is apportioned [and] guaranteed for you…Knowledge [on the other hand] is stashed away with its keepers, and you have been ordered to seek it from its keepers, so seek it."

In this teaching, Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) makes three distinctions about an Islamic conception of knowledge:

Knowledge perfects a person's religiosity

Not all knowledge is considered ʿilm (one of the Arabic terms for knowledge used in Islamic texts) in Allah's eyes. Knowledge is information that helps us to perfect our religious standing. That includes knowledge of Allah, His Prophets, and His Imāms and all of their teachings. It also includes the basics of how to pray, how to fast, and how to perform other religious duties. It includes knowledge of ethics and the way to develop a soft heart. In sum, knowledge shows us how to believe and how to practice; it is the path toward a closer relationship with God.

Knowledge also includes other useful forms of learning that help us to succeed in the world. For instance, knowledge of language, agriculture, medicine, business, and technical trades can be used to make a good living and sustain a family, which are Islamic priorities. Broadly speaking, any learning that aligns with what is permissible (ḥalāl) and with Islamic goals is a valid form of knowledge. In sum, knowledge is something that helps us achieve religious goals and righteous worldly goals.

Knowledge is the foundation for worldly sustenance

Allah has promised to provide sustenance (rizq) for His creation, but we must seek it through good work and good study. In order to work and study well, we have to know what is permitted (ḥalāl) and not permitted (ḥarām). In other words, knowledge of what Allah wants from us points us in a positive direction for our livelihoods; knowledge is a prerequisite that allows us to earn a pure income. The Imām teaches that knowledge is different from sustenance because it isn't guaranteed. It is something we must work hard to get from those who know. It is important to seek knowledge from pious teachers face-to-face or, when that is not possible, then through sound, authentic books. To learn and to seek knowledge in Islam doesn't mean the random reading of articles and books. It should be steady, consistent, focused, and from scholars who follow the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa). You aren't really seeking knowledge if you are just learning for leisure; seeking knowledge is a serious pursuit. And if we take knowledge from random sources then we are bound to be led astray.

Knowledge is to be acted upon

Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) mentions in the ḥadīth that knowledge must be activated. If we learn how to pray, but then we never pray, then what use is that knowledge? What did it do for us? Knowledge is something to be acted upon for it says in Noble Qurʾān, Sūrah al-Zumar Chapter 39: Verse 9:

Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only those who possess intellect take admonition.

Allah asks a rhetorical question in this verse to get us to reflect and think. The answer is obvious: someone who has knowledge is more virtuous than someone who is ignorant. Then Allah connects "knowledge" to "righteous action"—knowledge of Allah that is activated leads to fearing God which leads to God's love. It is narrated in al-Kāfī that the sixth Imām, Imām aṣ-Ṣādiq (ʿa) taught:

"The Noble Messenger (ṣ) said: *'Seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim. Let it be known: God loves seekers of knowledge.'"*

Allah's love is attained through the sincere search for Allah and His teachings and sincere activation of that knowledge through strong, proper practice.

Now, all of that seems vast and difficult. Take it step-by-step. Knowledge comes in pieces, brick by brick. Read, discuss, reflect, but don't feel overwhelmed. New vocabulary will click with time. New ideas will become clear with experience. And we pray that through study and reflection, we will perfect our religious practices, and ultimately attain Allah's perfect salvation in heaven. As Allah promises in the Noble Qurʾān Sūrah al-Mujādilah, Chapter 58: Verse 11:

Allah will raise those of you who have faith and those who have been given knowledge in rank.

Editor's Note: 2nd Chance Books is dedicated to the educational and spiritual growth of the community. As a part of this, there are books available upon request for our subscribers. Please write to the address provided to request one of the following books, Islamic Teachings, An Overview by Allameh Sayyid Mohammad Hosayn Tabataba'i and A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Lessons on Islamic Doctrine by Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari, Nahjul Balagha, Peak of Eloquence by Imām ʿAli b. Abī Ṭālib, The Qurʾān English Translation by ʿAli Quli Qara'i.

By Taymaz Tabrizi

Islam's Early Difficulties

The year 619 AD had been a very difficult year for the Prophet Muḥammad (ṣ) in which he lost two of his closest family members and protectors. This year was known as ʿĀm ul-Ḥuzn (The Year of Sorrows). The first to pass from this world was his beloved wife of 25 years, Khadījah al-Kubrā (ʿa), who, as we last saw, was the first to accept Islam and the main financial supporter of the Prophets and Muslims. The second loss during that year was his uncle Abū Ṭālib (ʿa). Abū Ṭālib (ʿa) had also been one of the early converts to Islam, although he had kept a low profile as he wanted to maintain his political clout in Mecca in order to protect the Prophet (ṣ). Abū Ṭālib (ʿa) was the chief of the Prophet's (ṣ) clan, the Banū Hāshim. When the Prophet (ṣ) had been orphaned at an early age, it was Abū Ṭālib (ʿa) who had adopted and raised him as if he were his own son. When the Prophet (ṣ) had announced Allah's message to the Meccans, it was Abū Ṭālib (ʿa) who protected him from harm at a time when many Muslims were defenseless, restrained, imprisoned, forced into exile, tortured, and even killed.

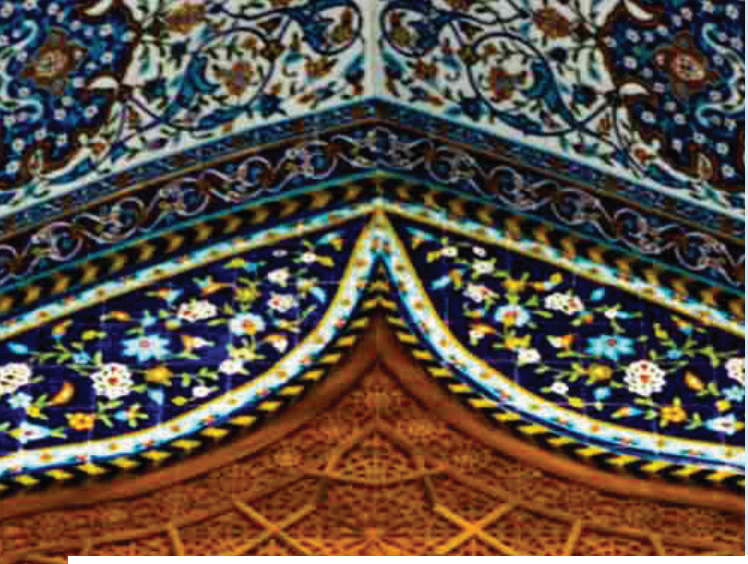
It was at the climax of the Prophet's (ṣ) pain and loneliness in that year when he was taken on the Isrāʾ and Miʿrāj, namely the Prophet Muḥammad's (ṣ) Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven, where he would meet Allah. It was during the Prophet's (ṣ) ascension that Allah would reveal the standard Muslim ritual of five daily prayers to him. Prayer was going to be a tool for Muslims to draw closer to Allah, and by doing so, their means of dealing with the intense suffering and pain of existence in this world.

This, of course, is in line with how God's providence works in the world (sunnat Allāh) where the Lord manifests Himself fully in moments of deep pain. As such, it is why Allah said that, "I am with the broken hearted," as well as when the Prophet (ṣ) said about God, "Allah loves all the weeping hearts."

This of course is in line with how God's providence works in the world (sunnat Allāh) where the Lord manifests Himself fully in moments of deep pain. As such, it is why Allah said that, "I am with the broken hearted," as well as when the Prophet (ṣ) said about God, "Allah (swt) loves all the weeping hearts."

As more people began to accept Islam, matters got gradually worse for the Prophet (ṣ) and his family. People would throw feces at him when he would pray or step out of his door. Attacks also became physical, causing the Prophet (ṣ) injury to the point that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (ʿa) had to step in front of him whenever he would go out, and absorb all the rocks and filth that were thrown at the Prophet's (ṣ) head.

Ridicule and mockery soon turned to accusations of sorcery. This is because the Qurʾān's eloquence and miraculous ability to attract people to Islam made the elders of Mecca realize that the message was no trifling matter. Society at large was being pulled and transformed by the Qurʿān's message, and the status quo of the city's idolatry and economic oppression was being threatened. As a response to various accusations, Allah revealed a challenge to the most eloquent litterateurs and poets of the peninsula to bring a chapter like the Qurʾān. The challenge still stood even if the chapter was only a few verses long. Yet, none of the peninsula's intellectuals could do so.



I always think of the hardships and trials the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) went through and I know there is absolutely nothing I can go through that they haven't been through or worse, and so I stand firm.

Finding Strength

through the Ahl-Bayt (ʿa)

Murtada is a current inmate from South Carolina. Currently serving a 20-year sentence, he will be eligible for release in 2026. Murtada accepted Islam while in prison and took on a different name to reflect his embrace of a new path.

Like many of those in prison, Murtada was exposed to crime through his life circumstances. Murtada's father had accepted Islam when Murtada was eight, but his parents did not remain together and he only saw his father occasionally. Islam had little presence in his life on a day to day basis as his father was not always present. His lower socioeconomic neighborhood offered few alternatives to the presence of crime for the growing children. By the ripe age of 13, Murtada was recruited and welcomed into a local chapter of a national gang. He soon regarded the gang members as his family–it would be this same family that would predicate his 20-year stint in prison.

With time, Murtada climbed the ranks of the gang as his role as well as his relationships intensified. With the increased intensity, things inevitably would get out of hand. Saving a gang brother's life, Murtada's actions resulted in the loss of another man's life.

The once tight knit family environment quickly dissolved and Murtada found himself alone behind bars.

After participating in Islamic classes in prison, asking questions and lengthy research led him to the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) where a fire was lit in his heart. A love was born that could not be replaced; he studied the lives of the members of the Holy Household (ʿa) and he used their examples of resilience and patience to mentally prepare himself for the remainder of his time in prison.

"People want to know what this 'other sect' of Islam is. They want to know who the Shīāh are. The truth is not to be concealed; it's to be revealed. We have it. We must share it and spread it. We have the potential and resources to do much more."

For the youth, he has some humble advice: "You have the power to change yourself, and change others for the better... learn, study, teach and exemplify. And when things are tough, remember when Allah has something good in store for His servant (whether youth or elder), He first bestows hardships upon him/her [sic]. The bigger the hardship, the bigger the blessing Allah has in store for you. So when things get hard, smile and remember that it's a prerequisite of Allah bestowing a blessing upon you."

Regarding his struggles with being a follower of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa), Murtada said, "It's very discouraging when you are oppressed (in prison) and ostracized and constantly being challenged to present proofs and evidences you know exist but you don't have access to the books because they aren't in your language. But even through all these difficult situations and challenges, I always think of the hardships and trials the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) went through and I know there is absolutely nothing I can go through that they haven't been through or worse, and so I stand firm."

It is the example of our seventh Imām, the oppressed and imprisoned Imām Mūsā b. Jaʿfar (ʿa) that Murtada gleaned his patience from, admitting that it was something he struggled with. Imām Mūsā b. Jaʿfar (ʿa) was imprisoned all throughout his life on false premises and accusations, but despite this, was still known to be tolerant, patient, and kind with people, thus earning him his title, "al-Kāẓim". It was with his imprisonment that he thanked Allah for the opportunity to worship Him extensively, stating it was an answer to his prayer to find time for Allah. During his time in prison, he was tortured and later poisoned on the orders of the then ruling Caliph Harūn ar-Rashīd.

If it wasn't for Imām al-Kāẓim (ʿa) when I did extensive time in lock up, I wouldn't have made it...I just thought about how hard he had it and yet he saw the blessing in his solitude, and so I did the same.

"If it wasn't for Imām al-Kāẓim (ʿa) when I did extensive time in lock up, I wouldn't have made it...I just thought about how hard he had it and yet he saw the blessing in his solitude, and so I did the same."

Murtada's sentence will come to a close in June 2026; by then he will have served 17 years of a 20 year sentence. His hopes and aspirations for life post release are that of a reformed man. He hopes to find a stable and positive environment, to find a job, and continue his education. He also wants to help other inmates through the State Correctional Departments by providing access to the appropriate Islamic studying materials. "Ultimately, I just want to contribute to the cause of the Ahl al-Bayt (ʿa) and spread their teachings as best we can. Inshāʾ Allāh."

Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī

By Shaykh Mateen Charbonneau

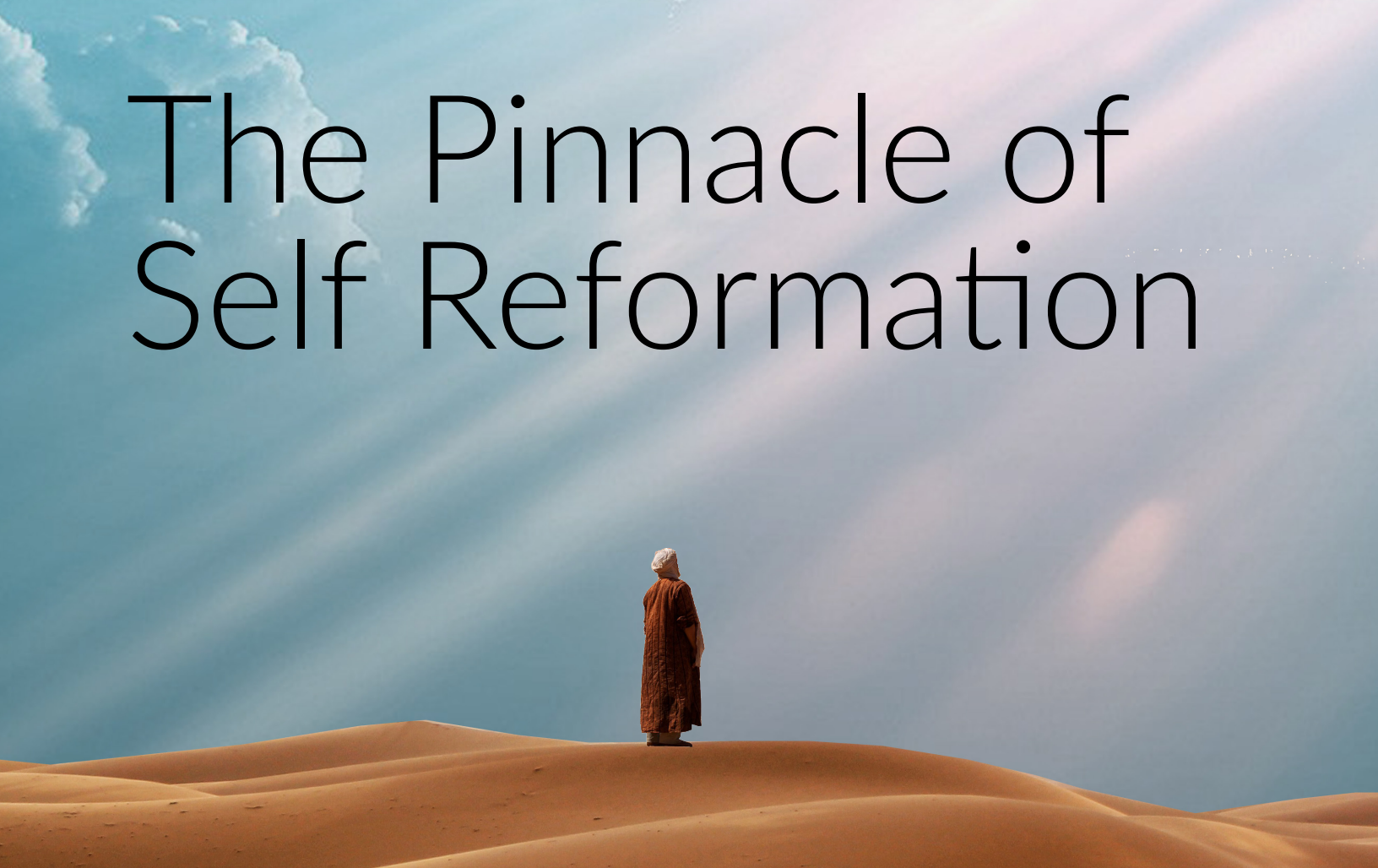
In history, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī was known as one of the esteemed companions of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and a faithful supporter of his household. Abū Dharr's life was not always under the guiding light of the Prophet (ṣ). Before coming to Islam, Abū Dharr was from the tribe of Ghifār whose members were well known for their mischief, amongst it, robbing caravans. The life of Abū Dharr has many lessons within it worth mentioning, namely his ability to embrace a complete self transformation when faced with the truth.

Allah has placed within each rūh (soul) an innate gravitation and desire toward hāq, or truth. Abū Dharr's soul, though clouded with sin, recognized this truth upon witnessing it in the form of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and gravitated toward it like a thirsty man to an oasis in the desert. Abū Dharr had first heard about the Prophet (ṣ) from a man coming from Mecca. The man said there was someone who claimed to be a prophet, declaring that there is only one God. For Abū Dharr, this idea of one God inspired deep reflections. It sparked the ember of curiosity which sent Abū Dharr to Mecca.

While in Mecca in search of the Prophet (ṣ), Abū Dharr happened to meet ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (ʿa). When Imām ʿAlī (ʿa) found out Abū Dharr's intentions, he took him to meet the Prophet (ṣ) whereupon Abū Dharr attentively listened to his guidance. Miracously, he was the fourth to embrace the new path of Islam that would alter not only his life as he knew it, but later his entire tribe. After his conversion, Abū Dharr did not hesitate to ask the Noble Prophet (ṣ) what he could do. He was at the service of Islam. The Prophet (ṣ) tasked Abū Dharr with traveling back home to teach his tribe Islam. Through his sharing of the truth about one God and Islam, Abū Dharr became successful in converting his family first, and then eventually, his entire tribe to the path of the Prophet (ṣ).

It is significant to highlight that the Prophet (ṣ) didn't shun Abū Dharr, no, instead he was welcomed with open arms. The Noble Prophet (ṣ) looked beyond his sullied past and saw the potential in him. Abū Dharr became a close companion of the Noble Prophet (ṣ) and also became a loyal companion of Imām ʿAlī (ʿa). Through learning and practicing the ways of the Prophet (ṣ) and his household (ʿa), Abū Dharr reached such a high status that the Noble Prophet (ṣ) said: "If you want to see the piety of Jesus (ʿa), then look at Abū Dharr." (Ibn ʿAsākir, Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq, Vol. 66, P. 190) This shows us that if we adhere to the path of the Prophet (ṣ) and his household (ʿa), we can abandon our past which was full of wrongdoings and adopt the way of the Noble Household (ʿa) and reach the great heights of Allah's pleasure. With Allah, there is always hope. It is never too late to return to Him and ask for His forgiveness. We see that Abū Dharr came from a family of thieves yet he ended up becoming one of the most truthful people. The Noble Prophet (ṣ) said that from amongst the companions there

The Pinnacle of Self Reformation



was no one under the sky more truthful than Abū Dharr. Even though he came from a rough environment filled with injustice and crime, he was able to change into a beacon for justice through the knowledge and understanding of true belief.

Abū Dharr placed the love of the Prophet (ṣ) above everything in his life. During the expedition of Tabūk he set off with the Prophet (ṣ) and his army, but Abū Dharr had a weak camel who could not keep up. He ended up getting separated from the group and lagged three days behind them. Some of the travelers with the Prophet (ṣ) claimed that he ran away, but the Prophet (ṣ) rejected these sentiments and instead stated that Abū Dharr would join them if Allah willed. As the journey progressed, the camel became too tired to travel and Abū Dharr had no choice but to walk. Walking extensively with his luggage on his back, thirst almost overcame him. He came across some water in a pit and wanted to drink from it, but refrained. How could he drink such cold and refreshing water while the beloved Prophet (ṣ) went thirsty, he thought. He continued on, eventually reaching Tabuk where he found the Noble Prophet (ṣ). Upon seeing his wretched condition, the Prophet (ṣ) inquired, "Did you not have any water to drink?!" He replied that he did, but that he could never drink it without first having the Prophet (ṣ) taste from it. Hearing this, the Prophet (ṣ) said, "O Abū Dharr! Allah will have His mercy on you. You will live alone, depart this world alone and you will rise alone on the Day of Judgment." (Ibn ʿAsākir, Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq, Vol. 66, P. 186)

Today, there are many struggling communities plagued with drugs, prostitution, gang violence and the like. This lifestyle, even if glorified and normalized by pop culture, is destroying our communities. In reality, what we are in desperate need of is the uplifting and spiritual growth of our communities. If we follow the example of Abū Dharr by learning and adhering to the teachings of the Immaculate Household (ʿa) of the Prophet (ṣ), we too can achieve great things and become beacons of guidance for others. We may be able to change the dangerous crime infested neighborhoods we came from into places of safety where people look out for one another. Allah says in the Noble Qurʿān, "Indeed Allah does not change a people's condition, unless they change what is in their souls" (13:11). We have the tools for our transformation at our fingertips, but it is up to us to use them in order to make a difference in our lives as well as the lives of others.

Sūrah al-Qadr

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾

Bismillāhir Raḥmānir Raḥīm

In the Name of Allah,the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful.

إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَـٰهُ فِى لَيْلَةِ ٱلْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾

Innā anzalnāhu fī laylatil-Qadr

Indeed, We have sent down the Qur'ān on the Night of Power (Destiny)

وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ ٱلْقَدْرِ ﴿٣﴾

Wa mā adrāka mā laylatul-qadr

Do you understand what the Night of Power (Destiny) is?

لَيْلَةُ ٱلْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٤﴾

Laylatul-qadri khayrun-min alfi shahr

The Night of Power (Destiny) is even better than a thousand months.

تَنَزَّلُ ٱلْمَلَـٰٓئِكَةُ وَٱلرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِم مِّن كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٥﴾

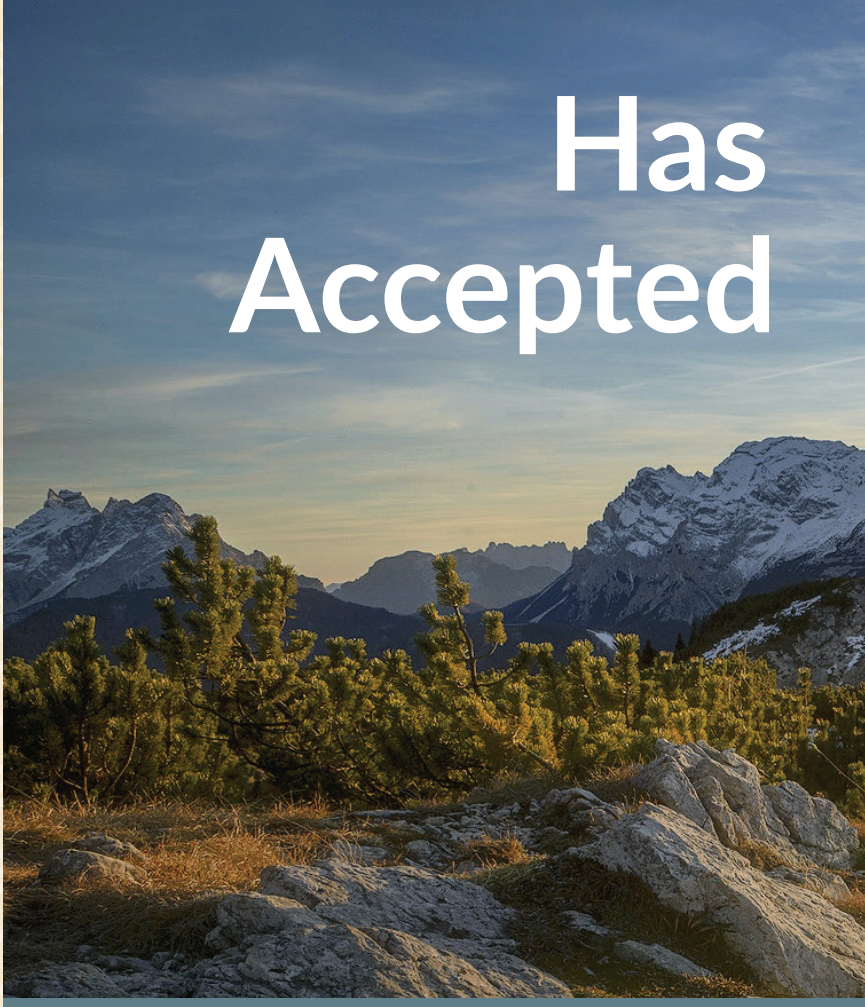
Tanazzalul-malā'ikatu war-rūhu fīhā bi idhni Rabbihim min kulli amr

The night in which the angels and the Spirit come down with the command of their Lord, bringing every creature's destiny in the upcoming year

سَلَـٰمٌ هِىَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ ٱلْفَجْرِ ﴿٦﴾

Salāmun hiya ḥattā maṭla'il-fajr

Peace and blessings fill the night until sunrise.



Has Accepted

Question 1: If a person feels remorse for committing sins, but he does not repent, will his sins be forgiven?

Answer: Repentance is, in fact, remorse for past sins, and the decision not to commit sins in the future. If a person truly feels remorse for committing a sin, then this is actually considered repentance. Therefore, although a person may not verbally seek forgiveness or announce his repentance, the act of repentance (feeling remorse) will be accepted from him. In spite of this, it is very important for an individual to actively repent and seek forgiveness from Allah. In some instances, Allah may forgive a person's sins even without that individual seeking forgiveness from Him, but it is important to remember that through repentance and seeking forgiveness, one is better able to benefit from the grace of Allah and gain closeness to Him. One should also note that if a sin includes the right (hāqq) of another person, forgiveness must be sought from that person in order for it to be forgiven by Allah thereafter. A person can ask for general

Allah My Repentance?

forgiveness for their lapses from the person they have harmed, instead of specifically asking for forgiveness for several offenses, like instances of backbiting.

Question 2: If a person unknowingly committed a sin, will they still be held accountable for it?

Answer: Not knowing (something) is of two types: sometimes a person may not know about something, but they have the ability to find the answer or ask about that ruling. However, instead of doing so, they are careless in their religious responsibility and commit a sin as a result. This individual is referred to as "Jāhil al-Muqassir," an ignorant person who is responsible for their actions and will be held accountable for those actions. Other times, a person may not have access to the laws of Allah (religion) or knowledgeable individuals. In this situation, if one commits a sin, then he will not be held accountable for it. If such a person later finds out that he missed performing a wājib action as a result of sinning, then he must make up that action.

Dhikr Corner

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْهِ

Astaghfirullāha Rabbī wa atūbu ilayh

I seek forgiveness from Allah, my Lord, and repent and return to Him.

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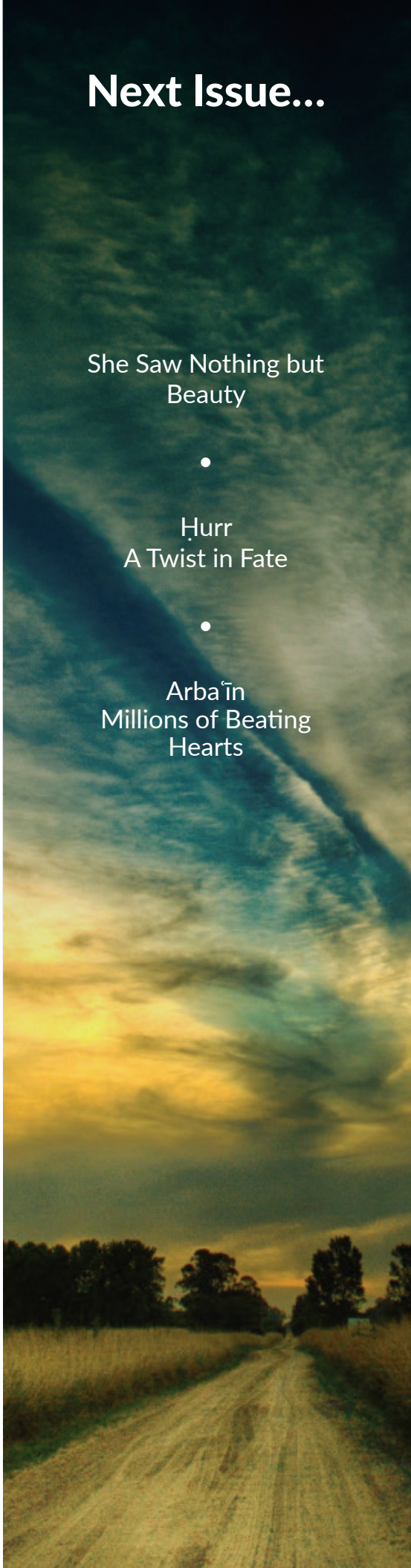
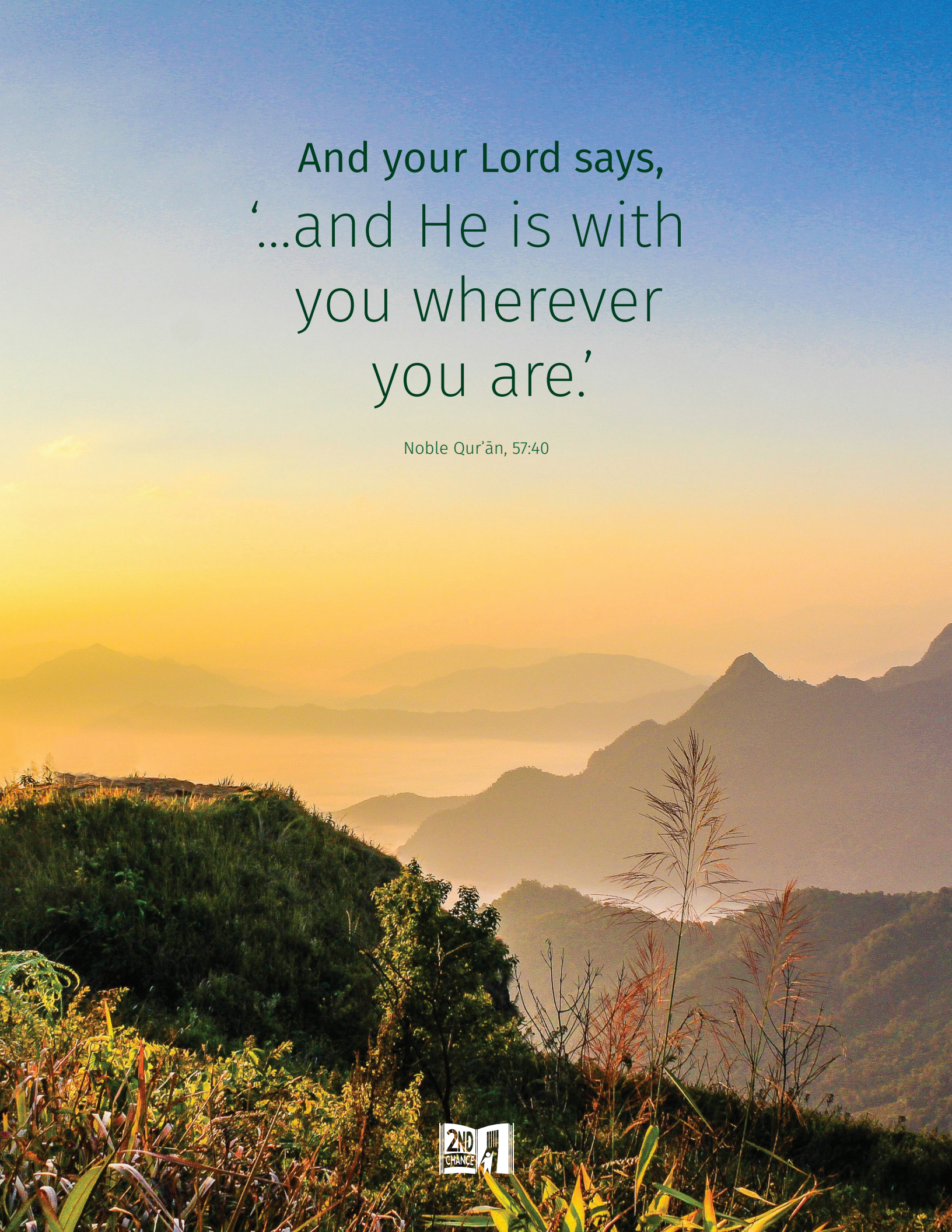
Transliteration Guide

Arabic terms in this booklet have been transliterated according to the following guidelines:

ء	a, i, or u (initial form)	ظ	ẓ
ء	ʾ (medial or final form)	ع	ʿ
ا	a	غ	gh
ب	b	ف	f
ت	t	ق	q
ث	th	ك	k
ج	j	ل	l
ح	ḥ	م	m
خ	j	ن	n
د	d	ه	h
ذ	dh	و	w
ر	r	ي	y
ز	z	ة	h (without iḍāfah)
س	s	ة	t (with iḍāfah)
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ	ـَـ	a
ض	ḍ	ـِـ	i
ط	ṭ	ـُـ	u




And your Lord says,
‘...and He is with you wherever you are.’
Noble Qur’ān, 57:40
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